10: d'Orleans--308 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 533, 562, 832

"The men gossip with the girls, give them flowers, play to them, recite verses, sing them songs and play at cards with them, but never dance with them. Men and women walk through the streets singing, in groups where the two sexes are apart, or sit opposite the one to the other at the entrance to the pagodas. I shall have an opportunity of recurring to these peculiar love-makings, and I have noticed that, in contradistinction to what generally takes place in the East, here it is the young women who dominate the men, who go through the form of beating them, if necessary, and who condescend to cast an amorous glance at them or to respond to their compliments."

25: Brodrick--106 [3] S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 562, 586, 883

"Laotian women seem never to have been parked and compressed into any sort of seclusion. Divorce is easy and a manner of seeking it was most charmingly civilized. If a husband had reason to think that his wife did not like him, he placed flowers upon her pillow. If she could still tolerate him, or if she had not any new plans, then she left the flowers untouched for three days. If she desired to get rid of her man, she threw the flowers away, whereupon he walked out and got a divorce.

And at the Love Courts, the phousao and the phoubao, the girls and the boys are free and equal, at least as far as the conventions rule."

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

following a crowd. It was about two miles from the town's centre 527
and I passed several pagodas on the way, where carpenters were working by lamplight in preparation for a future festival.

An enclosure had been built round the pagoda in which every 354
kind of light, from hurricane lamps to fluorescent tubes, had been 527
concentrated in an anarchic glare. The pagoda had hired a generator 545
for the occasion. There was no entrance fee, but young ladies with demurely lowered eyes waited just inside to accept donations, in return for which you received a candle, a posy of Japanese lilac and two joss-sticks in a bamboo container. Among the many attractions was a free theatre show, lasting for many hours, indistinguishable, except to an expert, from the theatre of Siam. Actors remained on the stage for what seemed interminable periods, occasionally advancing or retreating a few steps. Meanwhile their babies played happily round their feet, and quite frequently a stage-hand would walk across and interrupt a scene for a few seconds to pump up the pressure in the hurricane lamps.

On a nearby platform the *lap ton* was being danced. Once again 292
it was the major attraction, but as it was still incorrect for Laotian 301
girls to dance in public, religious enterprise had arranged for 535
hostesses to be brought over from Siam, just across the river. The 562
pagoda hired the girls for the three nights and lodged them in a 527
nearby building. It cost a piastre to cavort round the stage for about fifteen minutes with one of them. They were dressed in hideous knee-length frocks, and some seemed to have permanent waves. The backward Laotian girls in their dowdy finery, their silk scarves, their skirts woven at the hem and waist-band with silver and gold thread, and their abundant jewel-decked chignons, could only look on wistfully. As I arrived the organizers were having 403
trouble with the microphone – indispensable adjunct to any social 527
occasion in the new Far East. A young man chanted a soft, nasal melody which could only be heard within the *boun* enclosure itself. But suddenly the electricians were successful with their tinkerings and all Vientiane was flooded with a great, ogrish baying. The

643* driven out of their States, and succeeded as a conciliating suzerain
648* in restoring them to their rights.
175* It was under his reign that a rather unfortunate episode took place, one which was to be fraught with consequences for Lan-Xang and which is related in the Annamite chronicles. The relations which had heretofore been maintained with the descendants of the Giao-Chi had been highly courteous, and when the king of Annam Lê-Loi was attacked by a Chinese army in 1421 Lane-Kham-Dèng offered him a force of 30,000 warriors and a hundred elephants. Lê-Loi accepted with the keenest satisfaction, but scarcely had the reinforcements from Lan-Xang arrived on the spot when they betrayed their allies and went over to the Chinese. They gained nothing thereby, however, for the Annamites overthrew their enemies and brusquely escorted the soldiers of Lane-Kham-Dèng back to their own territory. Although he was lucky enough to escape from this wasps' nest, the king of Annam nevertheless felt a profound resentment at this betrayal. His successors inherited the grudge, and less than fifty years later one of them was to become the instigator of a widespread coalition to punish Lan-Xang.

/59/ NANG-KEO-PHIMPHA (1428-1438).

175* During the ten years which followed the death of Lane-Kham-
643* Dèng the harmony which presided over the destinies of the royal
562 dynasty was troubled by a cruel and authoritarian woman who was the actual governor under the ephemeral crowns of seven kings.

Nang-Keo-Phimpha was the eldest of the daughters of Sam-Sene-Thai (1). The Annals are extremely discreet as regards this

114 1. Pavie's translators, led astray by copyists' errors, wrongly
643* make of Nang-Keo-Phimpha, whom they call Maha-Thévi
175* (Great-Queen), "the daughter of Fa-Ngoun's predecessor" and the first wife of Sam-Sène-Thai. The predecessor of Fa-Ngoun, that is to say the latter's grandfather, died at an extremely advanced age in 1353. His daughter would then have been more than eighty years old at the time which concerns us, and this is not likely. From this initial error, aggravated by mistakes and omissions in calculating the Laotian cycles, there resulted an inextricable confusion in the chronology drawn up by Pavie's interpreters, who were Cambodians and did not know French. The present account, based on direct translations which are as faithful as possible

114 and on cross checks between the Annals and family documents,
643* is an attempt to reestablish the facts. The exact correspond-
175* ence of the dates justifies us in thinking that it is as close to historical truth as possible.

175* ambitious princess and limit themselves to recording her crimes with-
643* out explanation or comment. It may be that her intrigues had al-
562 ready brought Lane-Kham-Dèng to the throne in utter disregard of the eldest son's rights, or, on the other hand, she may have been impatient /60/ to see this younger son, who does not seem to have submitted to her influence and whose life she may have shortened, placed on the throne.

Phommathat, king 1428-1429. -- Pak-Houeï-Luong, king 1429. Thao-Sai, king 1430.

643* Whatever the case may be, she was discontented with her nephew
175* Phommathat, the eldest son of Lane-Kham-Dèng, and had him de-
662 posed ten months after his accession to the throne, then slaughtered on the rock of Pha-Dieou at the mouth of the Nam-Khane. Then she gave the crown to her brother Kham-Teun, the fourth son of Sam-Sène-Thaï and governor of Pak-Houei-Luong, who reigned under this latter name. Five months later, however, Kham-Teun had ceased to please and was replaced with Thao-Sai, the third son of Sam-Sène-Thaï and of Nang-Keo-Yopha. Scarcely six months had passed when the king discovered a plot to assassinate him which had been fomented by his sister. At his wits' end, he chose to hang himself in the bath chamber of his palace.

Phaya-Khai, king 1430-1433. -- Xieng-Sai, king 1433-1434.

Then Nang-Keo-Phimpha let her choice fall on her nephew Gnou-Khone, the second son of Lane-Kham-Dèng, who was governor of the /61/ Muong of Xieng-Khai and who chose the name of his province as his reigning name. Phaya-Khai "lasted" for three years and then died at Pak-Khane, assassinated by the inhabitants on his aunt's orders. Khone-Keo, the son of Sam-Sène-Thaï and of Nang-One-Sa, succeeded him under the name of Xieng-Sa and died in the same way seven months later.

Third son of Lane-Kham-Dèng, king 1434-1435.

Lane-Kham-Dèng's third son (whose name is unknown) replaced him for a space of eight months. In order to escape his aunt's fury,

the "Phi."

It is said that each of us has his good and his evil genie which are engaged in a constant struggle, and that we are good or evil according as the one or the other gains the upper hand. This is a kind of symbolism of good and evil, but here the controlling and guiding conscience is replaced by the influences of the moment, the occasion, the circumstances and the milieu.

Each house also has its own "genie", reminiscent of the Roman Lares, to which sacrifices and offerings are made on every possible occasion.

The evil "Phis" are more dreaded and receive a great many more offerings than the good "Phis," with whom no trouble need be taken.

In each village there is a sorcerer to explain the actions of the "Phis" and teach the way to gain their favor. Although consultations with them are not free of charge these sorcerers, who are called Mo-hou-ha, Mo-Phi or Phi-pop depending on the province, are just as [155] [Illustration] [156] [Blank page] [157] highly regarded as the "Guardians of the Genii" of the Buddhist religion and, like them, are exempt from servitude and taxes.

In times of epidemic all responsibility is attributed to the evil "Phis", and in order to make them take flight the men of the villages beat on the roofs of their houses with long bamboo poles until such time as the "Phis" are supposed to have disappeared.

The Khas have retained a belief in metempsychosis which is tinged with certain rather vague superstitions bearing on a future life and some kind of resurrection. But this second existence is not everyone's privilege, and will exist only insofar as one's life has been a good one.

They also believe in the existence of a place of torment where perjurers, murderers, etc. will remain for all eternity. To be sure, they believe in a general way that a new life will begin and that it will be a reward or a punishment for the individual's deeds in his last incarnation. Thus a brave and good man will return as a happy and respected chieftain. Others will be entitled only to an animal existence, the importance of which in the scale of being will be like a personification of their faults and merits. One odd fact is that women always want to return in the guise of a man.

Religion of the Lus. The religion practiced by the Lus is a form of Buddhism which has been mitigated by certain local customs

462 241 Tilling the ricefields, hunting, fishing and managing rafts and pirogues take up about six months of the year. The rest of the time they rest and enjoy themselves. The status of women in Laos, although not as low and painful as that of other women of Asiatic races, is nevertheless not as pleasant as that of their husbands. In fact, all the petty farming tasks fall on them. They perform all the household labors, care for the poultry yard and the livestock, etc. They do the cooking, decorticate the paddy, go and fetch wood and water, spin, weave and dye cotton and silk, take care of the children, etc. Less [182] fortunate than her husband, the Laotian woman has no leisure except on holidays, and even then she has to make all the preparations without letting her daily occupations suffer.

142 562 Of ordinary height, generally well made and even elegant of figure, the Laotian woman has a friendly face and is not without either grace or coquetry before her marriage. This does not mean that there are no homely girls, but these are rather an exception. As she grows older and worn from bearing children the Laotian woman loses much of her early grace, but in spite of everything she retains her joyousness, her high spirits and her very pronounced taste for celebrations when there is singing and feasting.

862 858 Laotian mothers worship their children. They take great care of them and often push their weakness for their children to such a point as to prolong the period of breast-feeding, often beyond the child's fourth year.

342 574 Dwellings. Like all the representatives of the Thai family, the Laotians inhabit houses which are rectangular in shape and are always raised one or two meters above the GROUND on piles. Wood and bamboo, in the form of beams, framing members, rafters, door and window casings, partitions, doors, windows, floors and shingles, are used to build houses, without the use of any nails, all joints and assemblies being fastened together with rattan.

The dimensions of the houses vary greatly and depend on the number of families that they are designed to shelter. Verandas with roofs which are sharply inclined and come down quite low are placed around the house, mainly on the south and west, to temper the heat of the sun and serve as a vestibule, a reception hall or a workshop. The family stays there during the day, as on a sort of neutral ground where people who are coming and going can be received without transgressing custom, which decrees that no one except members of the family and close friends shall have access to the inner apartments, which form the private home of the house's inhabitants.

304 produced with an implement bearing several fine points which are dipped in India ink or diluted cinnabar. Depending on the coloring matter used, the tattoos are dark blue or brick red in color. The tattoo artists give their taste and fancy free rein and produce the most varied designs which, for example, represent intertwined snakes, dragons, lions, tigers and imaginary animals. Oftentimes there is only one overall color which makes the tattooed person look like a man wearing a close-fitting blue bathing suit.

304 885 The practice of tattooing is a very old one and its origin is lost in [186] dark antiquity. It is at once a kind of coquetry and a proof of courage because of the suffering which the operation causes and the dangers it involves in a land where antisepsis is unknown to the natives and where the tools used are as dirty as the operators. [Illustration here]

In some localities a man who is not tattooed is regarded as lacking in virility, and as a sign of his inferiority he may not bathe upstream from women.

562 304 Laotian women are not tattooed. This custom is practiced only by the Youn and Kha women, where tattoos are usually limited to lines, stars or reptiles on the hands, imitations of rings on the fingers, etc.

301 [187] Personal adornment. In all seasons both men and women wear flowers on their ears or in a string around their coil of hair. This gracious custom, which flatters both the eye and the sense of smell, must be extremely ancient in origin. It is to be found in many parts of the globe which have no relation to Laos, and particularly in Polynesia. [Illustration here]

346 531 Pagodas. Laotian pagodas are as numerous as they are varied in respect to type of construction, architecture, dimensions and ornamentation. In sparsely populated villages and poor muongs the pagodas are built like the houses, either of wood, thatch or bamboo lattice, although with greater care and a few slight additional decorations. Elsewhere, in the larger centers, the pagodas are built of brick, roofed with tile, enhanced by many-colored and gilded ornaments of carved wood and embellished with pseudo-sculptured motifs made of staff. On the inside, the walls are covered with brightly colored frescoes [188] which often picture, against a gold background, religious or warlike scenes taken from the Ramayâna and other more realistic ones which often border on obscenity.

Hill Tribes

595 There is polygamy among the Meos, and the Meo women do not enjoy any higher regard than the Kha women.

[101] The Yaos. The Yaos have the same origin as the Meos, and are strikingly like them in many respects. Their mores, their beliefs and their habits are identical.

619 As we have seen above, the Yaos are divided into three varieties, these being the Lantenes, the Khao and the Ao-Tchaine.

291 The Lantenes (blacks) wear broad trousers, a long smock buttoning
302 at the side and a turban, all made of black cottonstuff. They wear their hair long and either wound under a turban or braided in Chinese style.

[342] Their houses are like those of the Meos and shelter several families, each of which has its own quarters. They are generally clean and well kept-up.

593 The mores of the Lantene Yaos are patriarchal, and these folk
562 are monogamous. The women are very reserved and do not let themselves be seen much by strangers. They enjoy a certain respect and are treated with consideration by their husbands.

231 The Lantenes are great livestock breeders, and cultivate the opium
241 poppy in addition to rice and maize. They are skilled hunters of wild
224 animals, and each man owns a rifle from which he is rarely separated.

[212] Besides a dialect peculiar to them, they speak Quoan-hoa (a
198 Cantonese idiom), and many of them can write Chinese characters.
101 The Khao Yaos are less outgoing than their fellows and do not greet strangers with as much good will.

291 The men's clothing is like that of the Lantenes, [269] but the women are garbed in a different manner and wear their hair in a special way which has earned their tribe the name "Khao" (horns).

Over a pair of black trousers ornamented with colored embroidery and held in place by leggings, Khao Yao women wear a tunic which comes down to the knees but the flaps of which are fastened to the belt. This tunic also has colored embroidery on the chest, back, neck and cuffs, and is held shut with wide silver hooks.

302 Their hairdress consists of a coil which is smeared with wax and lacquer to hold it in place and in which a wooden socket is imbedded. A light bamboo framework is inserted into the socket, and over this is spread a red cloth or a black cloth embroidered in red. The women thus appear to have two horns on their head.

301 Silver jewelry, neckbands, bracelets and ear pendants are worn by the Khao Yaos.

000 maintain a correct bearing. One should pay careful attention to one's words in order not to hurt those one is speaking to; that could engender an argument, a scandal, or at the very least it might create an atmosphere of embarrassment which is always unpleasant. One should listen to the general conversation and not interrupt the speech of an important person.

A banquet in the European manner. --The director or the president of an association takes care to send out his invitation cards several days in advance of the occasion. The invited guest must answer before the day of the meal to say whether he accepts or declines the invitation. In the latter case he should state the reason for his inability to come.

Politeness requires that one come on time. One should come neither too soon nor too late. If a person does not observe the hour, one often says jokingly that he adopts "mong lao" (the Laotian hour). By "Laotian hour" is understood "one hour later than the one arranged.
/805/ Every guest who arrives at 9:00 P.M. when the dinner is set at 8:00 P.M. goes by the "Laotian hour."

My dear compatriots, in order to be polite, adopt, from now on, the European hour; 8:00 P.M. is 8:00 P. M. and not 9:00 P. M.

He who presides over the banquet is seated in the middle while the most important person invited is placed in front of him. The persons of secondary importance are seated: first, to the right of the President, second, at his left, third, to the right and to the left of
/562/ the outstanding guest and so forth. Laotian women have the habit of keeping apart from the men. At a banquet the group of women sits by itself. From now on we must remedy this custom because the place of the woman should be between two men.

At the table the guests remain standing and do not sit down until their hosts are seated.

Do not wipe your plates and your silver with your napkin. In so doing you would show your hostess that she does not like cleanliness and that she has not given the necessary instructions to her servants to assure the cleanness of the plates and dishes.

Formerly the number thirteen used to be considered unlucky in France: it was necessary to avoid that the number of guests at a banquet should come to 13; one had to arrange it so that one would have a smaller or larger number lest some misfortune might occur to

naturally be "water." These two elements, opposed though they are 593
to one another, nonetheless go together. If you should happen to 647
raise your voice, see to it that it does not reach the ears of your 565
neighbors who will be sure to laugh at your domestic misunderstanding.
There is a good way to appease your anger: that is to go out and get
some fresh air. A moment of distraction will calm your irritation.
This precious and effective remedy is called, according to a Laotian
expression, "to caress one's heart with a hand drenched with fresh
water."

On a walk and on a visit.--Formerly it used to be considered 574
a disgrace for a mandarin to go for a walk by himself or to visit minor 647
functionaries. Nowadays this is no longer the case. A Laotian 565
Minister goes out alone without being accompanied by the traditional 178
retinue. He visits all classes of society without being criticized for
it by anyone at all.

At a private gathering.--In contrast to the customs of former
times, present-day mandarins accept the invitation of a simple
citizen. The host very often organizes various diversions: dances, /533/
lamvong, orchestras, songs etc. The Ministers willingly participate /535/
in these; they sing, dance, and pay their respects to the phousaos
while they mingle with the crowd. Certain Laotians whom I consider
backward criticize the liberal manner on the part of our Ministers.
Our great mandarins are their own masters. Let them turn a deaf
ear to these carpings. /978/

Honor Laotian Women

Some people consider the Laotian woman as an inferior 562
creature.

Certain women, it appears, are not permitted to eat with
their husband. Miserable husbands! You consider then that your
better half is like an animal?

Certainly, tradition says: "The woman must sleep with her /513/
head lower than her husband's. She must go to bed after him and
she must get up before him. The husband must have eaten three /264/
mouthfuls of rice before the wife can begin to eat in her turn."

These counsels of our fathers are valuable, but they are far
from indicating that the woman is inferior to the man. They recommend,

562 rather, to the wife, that she be good and serviceable and that she sweeten the conjugal life.

A great mandarin who has chosen a life's companion, be she the offspring of a family from the common people or not, has raised her to his rank. She is therefore just as respectable, if not more so, as her husband, since the fair sex is, out of courtesy, more highly regarded than the stronger sex in all civilized countries.

We must therefore render the respect to Laotian women which is their due by the same title which makes it the due of Western women. It is necessary:

1. --that at gatherings the women should not sit on the floor while the men are seated in chairs.

2. --that at banquets the women be placed each one between two men;

3. --that the places of honor be reserved for the weaker sex;

4. --that the women be served before the men;

5. --that the man yield his seat to the woman in auditoriums, in vehicles of public conveyance, etc.

In a word, it is necessary that the man respect the woman and that he no longer look upon her as inferior to himself.

* * *

000 To conclude, in my opinion it would be preferable to modify and even to suppress certain of our customs and of our traditional ceremonies provided this modification does not run contrary to Buddhist rules. There would be occasion to regulate, notably, the funeral ceremony in Laos: for example in a funeral procession to prescribe orderly walking and the observance of silence; to prohibit smoking, the chewing of tobacco, and so forth.

771 Sometimes "tradition" and "superstition" are confused. I repeat, all that partakes of the domain of superstition must be banished. The Laotian is subject to a great number of superstitions, of which the following are some examples: /979/

784 It is forbidden, under certain pretexts:

--to have one's hair cut on Wednesday and to wash one's hair on Thursday because it is on these days, it is said, that Buddha had his hair cut and washed;

--to go on all fours in the deep forest, in order not to attract

He[1] must never look at a woman. However a few old women are seen in the pagoda. These are the devotees. They are dressed in white, their heads are completely shaved, and they lead a life of observance and asceticism which is as rigorous as that of the monks. They render small services to the bonzes, decorate the altar, etc., but they live outside the enclosure of the pagoda. 792 785 562

Laotian Buddhism.

In a recent pamphlet, His Excellency Thao Nhouy Abhay, former Minister of National Culture and Education, wrote: "In its intrinsic substance Buddhism is deeply tolerant, but ours [26] has truly become not austere enough." Therefore he proposes some necessary reforms which would quickly raise the intellectual and moral level of the bonzes in Laos. There are two sects in Laos: the Mahanikay and the Thammayut. The only difference between the two is the way in which they consider that monastic rule should be observed. Nothing distinguishes them in appearance except the color of the monastic robe of the Mahanikay, which is brownish-ochre almost chestnut. The king is the chief of the Buddhist clergy. As for the believer who regularly observes his religious duties, he is satisfied with little and gives much in alms. Buddhist tales and particularly Laotian texts, among them the Pannasajataka (Ha Sip Xat), quote all the merits acquired for future lives by those who give alms and, above all, feed the bonzes. 779 795 [792] 643 [735]

Religious Literature.

The basis of the religious literature of Laos is the Buddhist Tripitaka. These "Three Baskets" contain the integral "word of the Buddha." 779 538

The basket [corbeille] of Vinaya (Vinayapitaka) is the rule of monastic life. It consists of five sections: Patimokkha, Mahavagga, Coullavagga, Souttavibhanga and Parivara. The Patimokkha is meant to be read in public (particularly on the feasts of the eighth month), on the periodic days of confession. The Mahavagga and the Coullavagga give the list of daily obligations, illustrated by examples drawn from the life of the Buddha. The Souttavibhanga is really a commentary on the Patimokkha; finally the Parivara is both a revision and a catechism.

The Basket of the Soutta (Souttapitaka) contains an enormous amount of preaching and of edifying tales. Among others, the famous Dhammapada, a treasury of the sayings of the Buddha and the Jatakas are to be found in this basket.

[27] The third basket is that of Abhidharma and consists of seven

1 [i.e., a bonze --Analyst]

342 bedrooms separated from each other by partitions or curtains, the [178] other is the communal room. In the space between the inner and outer beam, and not limited by the longitudinal partition, is the altar on which there are always one or several buddhas. It is placed on the side of the bedrooms, on the "soung" side of the dwelling, that is on the side opposite the entrance. The dimensions of the dwellings vary between six and twenty-four meters long by four to nine meters wide.

342 The houses are most often open to the east or to the north. They
823 may also overlook what is passing by in the streets or the paths and, as the case may be, the whole length of the river. For there is a superstition which forbids building "across the current," which is considered as unconquerable and invincible, and it would be dangerous to defy it.

343 The outhouses consist of an adjoining kitchen and a granary, a
[252] few meters removed from the principal dwelling. Near this granary is found the picturesque rice pestle (khok khao) which the women work with their feet.

343 [62] All the villagers participate in building the house. When the
476 propitious day and moment have been determined, the owner feeds everybody the whole time the house is being built.

Tattooing

301 Every self-respecting Laotian must be tattooed. The absence of
885 tattooing is a sign of mental and moral, therefore of social, inferiority.
562 As a general rule, however, the Laotian woman is not tattooed. This custom is found only among the women of Youan, Kha or Lu.

The Laotian is tattooed chiefly on his thighs, forearms and chest.
301 The tattooing on the thighs is so close together that from a distance a tattooed man looks as if he were wearing close-fitting blue shorts. The Laotians are called "white bellies" as opposed to those who are tattooed down to the navel and are then called black bellies. The colors used for tattooing are indigo blue, red, and black made from a mixture of lampblack diluted with buffalo gall.

[757] Those who have been tattooed are convinced that the signs they wear give them certain supernatural powers, particularly making them invulnerable to bullets and make bites. During the events of 1941 Siamese soldiers were found wearing white cotton vests covered with cabalistic signs closely related to tattooing. These are a kind of removable tattooing intended to protect those who are wearing them.

May, and Vat Visun to render homage to the protecting genii of the village and chase away the evil spirits. 527

During three days the Laotians do no cooking. Fish, turtles, birds, etc., are bought in the big market and then set free as a sign of penitence and redemption of sins committed either voluntarily or not against living beings during the past year. 782

Possibly there is here a survival of the origin of the cycle of animals. According to Finot, at a very remote period, the custom of curing sick children by letting an animal go free had arisen. When a child was saved in this manner, he was said to have been born from this animal because he owed it life. He was forbidden to kill it, and the year of the child's birth was given the same [68] name as the animal. It is thus that the cycle of twelve years was established. 825 771

In the dry beds of the Mekong and of the Nam Khan, small that made of sand are built. Each one wishes the other a long life, whose number of years will equal the number of grains of sand forming the that, and great prosperity, for ill-luck has fled with the last day of the past year, and the New Year should bring as many riches as there are grains of sand in the that. Often around the principal that, other much smaller ones are erected, their number corresponding to the age of the builder. They express the wish of the one who has built them that he will see many more years added to those he has already lived. Actually these little that around the central mound are a reproduction of Mount Merou surrounded by different worlds (Cf. the symbolism of the That Luang). 527 805

In the pagodas the statues of Buddha are taken down from the altars and placed in little wooden prasat. They are sprinkled with perfumed water which flows in the hang-lin (a kind of gutter of gilded wood whose extremities represent the head of an aquatic monster), for the year now ending must be completely exhausted, and a minute cleansing, both material and spiritual, must leave a strictly clear way for the New Year. In the streets the young girls sprinkle not only the bonzes whom they honor, but all the young men, to compensate for all the minor vexations they have endured from the men during the past year. The high dignitaries are not exempt from these showers of more or less clean water. Sometimes their faces are rubbed with lampblack or mud, when they have the ill luck of meeting a group of young girls. Do we have a survival of the theme of the svayamvara here (free choice of the man by the young girl)? [562]

[86] The day in between, the day before New Year's day, is one of complete rest. All the events which occur during this day will determine